

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSO-00 INRE-00 NSCE-00
ICAE-00 OES-09 DLOS-09 CAB-02 COME-00 DOTE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY OSLO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6431
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY HELSINKI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
SECDEF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 OSLO 4413

E.O. 11652: NGDS
TAGS: PEPR, NO, SV, UR
SUBJ: SVALBARD AIR CRASH-- GON PLAN TO RESOLVE BLACK BOX DELEMMA

REF (A) OSLO 4403 (NOTAL), (B) OSLO 4359 (NOTAL), (C) OSLO 4333
(NOTAL) (D) OSLO 4289 (NOTAL)

1. FONMIN FRYDENLUND CALLED ME LATE ON THE AFTERNOON
OF SEPTEMBER 7, ASKING ME TO MEET WITH HIM AND
STATE SECRETARY STOLTENBERG AT 1800 THAT EVENING.

2. FRYDENLUND OPENED THE MEETING BY DESCRIBING THE
VARIOUS DISCUSSIONS WHICH HE HAD HAD WITH SOVIET
AMBASSADOR KIRICHENKO CONCERNING THE OPERATIONS ATTENDANT
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ON THE AUGUST 28 CRASH OF A SOVIET BADGER AIRCRAFT AT
HOPEN ISLAND, SVALBARD. HIS DISCRIPTION OF THE
DISCUSSIONS CONFIRMED THAT GIVEN BY HIS SENIOR AIDES
(REFTELS). IN EFFECT, THE GON HAD INSISTED THAT ITS
AIR CRASH INVESTIGATION COMMISSION WOULD CONDUCT ITS
INVESTIGATION BEFORE THE SOVIETS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO
PUT PEOPLE ASHORE. THE SIZE OF THE SOVIET PARTY AND

THE DURATION OF ITS STAY ON HOPEN WERE ALSO NEGOTIATED AND, AT LENGTH, AGREED UPON BY THE GON AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN OSLO. THE TWO PARTIES ALSO WORKED OUT SUCH DETAILS AS THE PARTICULAR SOVIET SHIPS THAT WOULD BE USED. THE GON HAD ALSO INSISTED THAT THE SOVIET SHORE PARTY BE UNARMED. FRYDENLUND OBSERVED THAT THE SOVIETS WERE TOUGH IN THEIR NEGOTIATING, BUT THAT ONCE THEY DID AGREE ON AN ITEM, THEY STUCK BY THEIR AGREEMENT.

3. FRYDENLUND SAID THAT ALL WENT RELATIVELY WELL UNTIL THEY REACHED A STICKING POINT ON THE MATTER OF THE FLIGHT RECORDER. HE OUTLINED THE GON'S CURRENT TWO OPTIONS FOR RESOLVING THE MATTER. IN THE FIRST OPTION, THE GON, ON THE BASIS THAT THE PLANE WAS A MILITARY AIRCRAFT AND HENCE CONTAINED NO FURTHER DATA REQUIRED FOR CIVIL AVIATION PURPOSES IN NORWAY, COULD COMPLY WITH THE SOVIET DEMANDS TO RETURN THE RECORDER. THE SECOND OPTION CALLS FOR THE GON TO CONVINCE THE SOVIETS THAT THE NORWEGIAN AUTHORITIES MUST FOLLOW USUAL PROCEDURES REGARDING CIVIL AIR CRASHES AND SEND THE RECORDER TO ENGLAND FOR ANALYSIS.

4. FRYDENLUND POINTED OUT THAT RETURN OF THE RECORDER WOULD ENGENDER SO MUCH PUBLIC OPPOSITION IN NORWAY THAT THERE COULD BE NO RATIONAL NORWEGIAN POLICY
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TOWARD THE USSR FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS. CONVERSELY, HE SAID, SENDING IT TO ENGLAND WOULD SO OFFEND THE USSR THAT SOVIET/NORWEGIAN RELATIONS WOULD BE SERIOUSLY DAMAGED BY THAT COURSE OF ACTION AS WELL.

5. FRYDENLUND THEN DESCRIBED KIRICHENKO'S HEAVY-HANDED REPRESENTATION ON SEPTEMBER 6. THE RUSSIAN, HE SAID, TOLD FRYDENLUND THAT KEEPING THE BOX WAS A VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, AND DEMANDED ITS IMMEDIATE RETURN. KIRICHENKO'S DEMANDS, FRYDENLUND SAID, EFFECTIVELY RULED OUT THE OPTION OF RETURNING THE RECORDER TO THE SOVIETS
6 THE PROBLEM WAS FURTHER COMPLICATED, FRYDENLUND SAID, BY THE FACT THAT THE ENGLISH LABORATORY CANNOT GUARANTEE ITS ABILITY TO DECIPHER THE RECORDER. AT THE SAME TIME, THE SOVIETS CLAIM THAT INEXPERT INSPECTION OF THE RECORDER WOULD DESTROY IT.

7 YET ANOTHER COMPLICATION, THE MINISTER SAID, WAS THE FACT THAT THE PRESS HAD JUST DISCOVERED THE ACCOUNT OF A LITTLE-PUBLICIZED FRENCH CRASH AT SVALBARD A DECADE AGO. IN THAT INSTANCE, THERE WAS NO INVESTIGATION AND THE WRECKAGE WAS REMOVED BY THE FRENCH. THE SOVIETS,

HE SAID, WOULD BE SURE TO USE THIS PRECEDENT IN THEIR
FUTURE DISCUSSIONS OF THE MATTER.

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8. FRYDENLUND THEN OUTLINED A THIRD OPTION FOR RESOLVING
THE PROBLEM. THE GON, HE SAID, IS TRYING TO LEARN IF
THERE EXISTS A CAPACITY IN NORWAY TO DECIPHER THE
RECORDER. IF SUCH CAPACITY DOES EXIST, THE EXAMINATION
WOULD BE DONE IN NORWAY WITH AN INVITATION TO THE USSR
TO SEND EXPERTS TO HELP. THIS WOULD RULE OUT THIRD
COUNTRY INVOLVEMENT, WHICH APPARS TO BE THE MAJOR SOVIET
CONCERN.

9. THE MINISTER SAID THAT, GIVEN HIS CHOICE, HE WOULD
SEND THE RECORDER TO ENGLAND. THIS COURSE, HOWEVER, WOULD
ENGENDER VERY SERIOUS SOVIET OBJECTIONS. THE SOVIETS,
HE NOTED, WILL ALSO BE ANGRY IF THE RECORDER IS KEPT IN
NORWAY, BUT MUCH LESS SO THAN IF IT IS SENT TO ENGLAND.
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10. FRYDENLUND OBSERVED THAT THE ENTIRE EXERCISE WAS A RESPONSE TO NORWEGIAN PUBLIC OPINION. NOBODY, HE SAID, REALLY WANTS TO KNOW THE CONTENTS OF THE RECORDER. THE GON, HE SAID, HAS NO OBLIGATION TO INSTRUCT THE SOVIETS ON THE DETAILS OF THE CRASH.

11. FRYDENLUND THEN OBSERVED THAT IF THE GON CAN MAKE THE THIRD OPTION WORK, THE AIR CRASH MATTER WILL HAVE BEEN RESOLVED. HE THEN COMPARED THE NORWEGIAN FIRMNESS AND RELATIVELY FAST RESPONSE IN THIS CASE TO THE MATTER OF THE JUNE/JULY SHIP INTRUSIONS WHICH, HE SAID, WAS BADLY HANDLED BY THE GON. (IN AN INTERESTING ASIDE, HE SAID THAT HE WAS CONVINCED THAT THOSE INTRUSIONS WERE ACCIDENTAL BUT THAT THAT WAS NO CONSOLATION SINCE THEY WERE INDICATIVE OF THE VASTLY INCREASED SOVIET TRAFFIC IN THOSE WATERS.) REVERTING TO THE AIR CRASH, HE SAID THAT HE WAS PROUD OF GON CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN THIS INSTANCE.

12. FRYDENLUND EMPHASIZED THAT THE OPTION OF EXAMINATION OF THE RECORDER IN NORWAY SEEMED THE ONLY WORKABLE SOLUTION. HE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT IT WOULD PROVIDE TIME TO LET THE PUBLIC CALM DOWN AND WOULD ENTIRELY PRECLUDE SOVIET OBJECTIONS TO THIRD COUNTRY INVOLVEMENT.

13. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUESTION, I SAID THAT I AGREED WITH HIM THAT THE THIRD OPTION (INSPECTION IN NORWAY) APPEARED TO BE THE MOST WORKABLE.

14. COMMENT: FRYDENLUND IS PROBABLY CORRECT IN RATING HIS PLAN AS THE BEST POSSIBLE WAY OUT OF THE "BLACK BOX" CONUNDRUM. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, HOWEVER, IF THE USSR
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WILL TAKE A LONG ENOUGH VIEW OF MATTERS TO CONCUR WITH THE GON PROPOSAL. GIVEN THE PRESSURE OF PUBLIC OPINION AT PRESENT, THE GON'S ONLY OTHER VISIBLE CHOICE IS TO SEND THE BOX ABROAD.
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